

ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ

In the fifth century, uncial also started to be written faster, which resulted in the **half uncial**, a type consisting of majuscules and minuscules. In various forms, the half-uncial remained in circulation until the end of the thirteenth century. Magnificent examples of the script are found in the Irish *Book of Kells*, two pages of which are depicted on the preceding pages.

minuscule mIJuScule MAJUSCULE

Filosofia Unica

Designer Zuzana Licko added a modern uncial to her 1996 typeface Filosofia. The Unica above is a mixture of capitals (majuscules) and lower-case letters (minuscules). An uncial is mainly written between two lines, while the longer descenders and ascenders distinguish the half uncial. The Filosofia Unica plays with that by letting the 'j' and the 'q' just escape the confines of the two lines. The overall impression is still that of an uncial. The design is an interpretation of typefaces as shown in the *Manuale Tipografico* by Giambattista Bodoni, published as a type specimen book by his widow in 1818.

The Carolingian minuscule In the fourth century, at the same time that the Roman Empire was in decline, Christianity was proclaimed the state religion by emperor Constantine the Great. In Western Europe, the church became an important producer of texts, which were still drawn up in Latin. These needed to be distributed, which could only happen after they had been copied by hand. Writing was and remained the monopoly of monks for a good thousand years. They perfected the art of producing and adorning manuscripts. Few people knew how to read or write.

Even Charlemagne, who as emperor of the Holy Roman Empire was the most powerful man around 800 AD, was illiterate. He did not want to learn how to write himself – he had other people to do that for him – but to streamline the communication and administration of his vast empire and thus continue his vision and power, he decided in 768 to prescribe a new, official half uncial, composed by his secretary Alcuinus. As an abundance of often inaccurately copied texts were in circulation, Charlemagne had brand new, accurate copies made of the most authentic sources. These were marked 'ex authentico libro' (from the original work) and were written in the official handwriting, the **Carolingian minuscule**. Partly for its clarity and beauty it became the dominant letter in Western Europe until the end of the thirteenth century.

um in ter impios peregr
eterne quam nunc ex
tat in iudiciū demceps
perfecta hoc opere ad
aduersus eos qui cond
suscepi magnū opus & a

Carolingian minuscule
The longer descenders and
ascenders are clearly visible.

RSTUVWXYZ

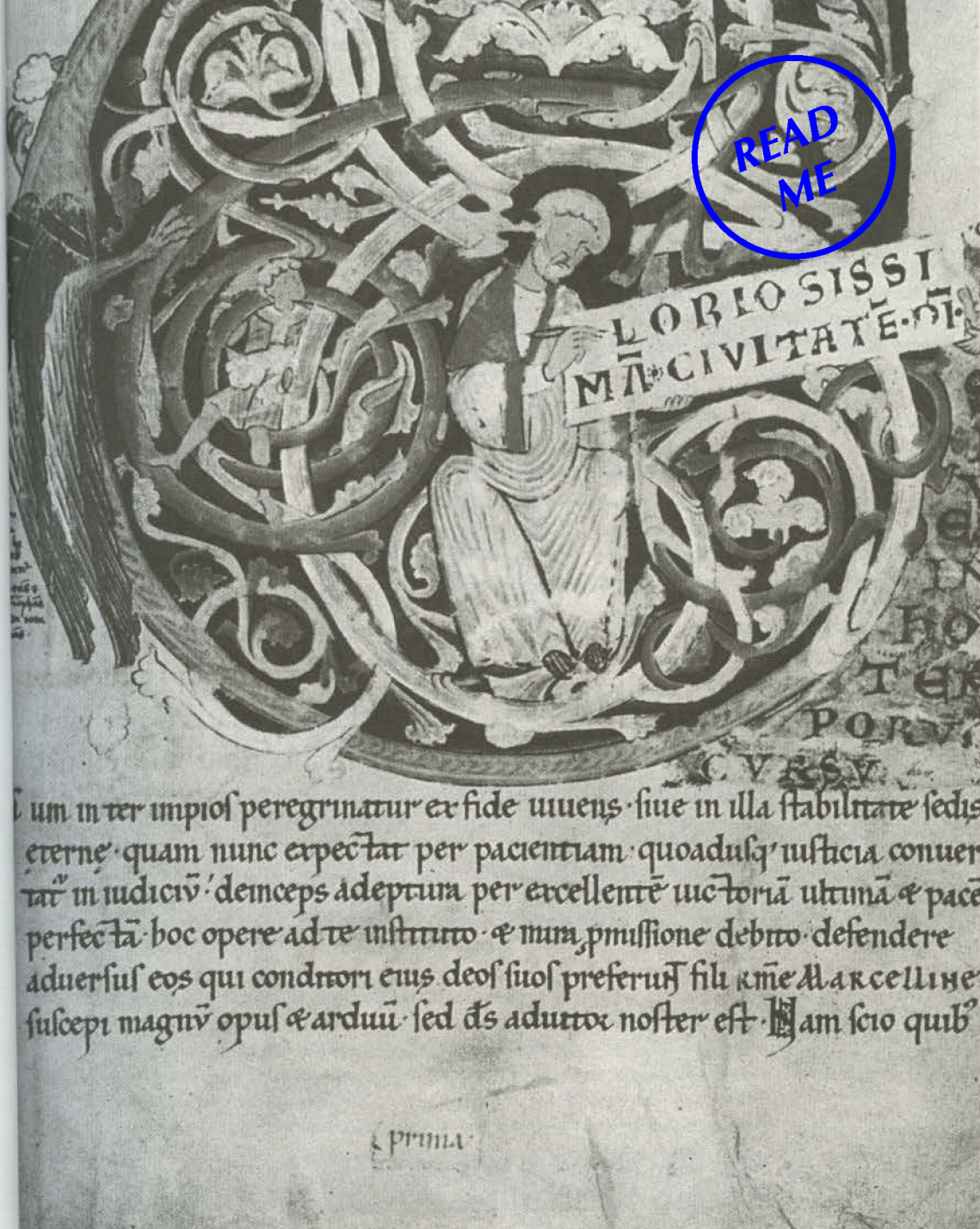
sulted in

d of the
the Irish
es.

Rule

fourth century, at the same time that the
Christianity was proclaimed the state religion by
Western Europe, the church became an
institution still drawn up in Latin. These needed
to be written down after they had been copied by hand.
Only of monks for a good thousand years.
and adorning manuscripts. Few people

the Holy Roman Empire was the most
powerful. He did not want to learn how to
do that for him – but to streamline the
administration of his vast empire and thus continue his
dynasty. He prescribed a new, official half uncial,
which was an abundance of often inaccurately
copies. These were marked 'ex authentico libro'
written in the official handwriting, the
clarity and beauty it became the dominant
script of the thirteenth century.



Carolingian minuscule
The longer descenders and
ascenders are clearly visible.